

INDEX CARDS:

Wyandotte Reservation
Indian Removal
Living Conditions
Mission School
Major Redpath
Indian Police
Ranching

LEGEND & STORY FORM
 WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
 Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

6438

Field worker's name Nannie Lee BurnsThis report made on (date) July 19371. This legend was secured from (name) J. S. DawsonAddress 3rd Ave. S. E. Miami Okla.This person is (male or female) White, Negro, Indian,If Indian, give tribe Wyandotte

2. Origin and history of legend or story _____

From memory

3. Write out the legend or story as completely as possible. Use blank sheets and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____

INTERVIEW WITH J. S. DAWSON
BY
Nannie Lee Burns, Field Worker
Indian-Pioneer History S-149
July 1, 1937

THE DAYS THAT WERE

My grandfather was Jared Silas Dawson of Scotch descent. My grandmother was Kathrine Dawson, nee Long, a half Wyandotte. They had five children; Dora, Jerdie, Ella, Kate, and my father, Robert A.

The first we know of the family they were at Zanesville, Ohio. My grandfather assisted by my father and others came to Kansas and surveyed the Kansas reservation for the Wyandottes before they were settled there. He returned to Ohio and did not move his family to Kansas at all but located at Bellfountaine, Ohio, where he continued to live till he brought his family to this county in November, 1876. Father married Nannie E. Keller a white woman of Cynthanna, Kentucky, a cousin of Helen Keller. They had four children: Raymond, Jared Silas (myself), Jerdie (who married Bonnin), and Naomi who married Alfred Pacheco, besides three that died when small. My parents were married 68 years ago the 13th of this June in Bellfountaine. I was born in Bellfountaine, September 22, 1876.

THE MOVE TO INDIAN TERRITORY

We came by train to Seneca, Missouri and were met

-2-

there by Isaac Walker and Bert Walker, who took us to their home where we spent the night and stayed till father arranged and decided on a location for the family. From a man here he bought a cabin in the forks of the Neosho and Spring River about three and a half miles south of Ottawa. We came in November of 1876 when I was two months old. The place that father bought was a very small one-room log house. Mother brought with her a small cookstove; however, we had a fireplace for heat. Settling and getting things together to farm with and ready to make a crop the next spring was a winter's work. Father made rails and fenced truck patches, cleared and fenced fields, and bought a team of horses. The only animal brought with us was a bench-legged dog, named Frank. Two pieces of furniture I remember was a large walnut bedstead on which mother used to place us four children crosswise, and the oak bedstead that she and father slept on.

During the first years we children went through the winter with moccasins made of jeans. Mother did not weave and spin, but she knitted our socks and gloves, and did much darning.

VISITORS FOR DINNER

We had been there but a few weeks when one day several men rode up and one of them said to mother, "We are a tough

-3-

locking lot. We are the James and the Younger Boys, but we are hungry, and could you give us something to eat?" Mother replied that they had not been there long but that if they would come in she would give them what she had. Father fed their horses and she prepared them a dinner and when they were ready to leave Jesse James handed mother a twenty-dollar gold piece and thanked her for the meal.

THE NEXT HOUSE

When I was five years old father cut and prepared the logs for a new house. The neighbors came and raised the logs and put them across, placed the clapboard roof, and laid the puncheon floor, and moved the family's furniture in. That night we had a dance and a supper as a house-warming. While they were working, Arthur Johnson, one of the men, got snakebitten.

For a light, mother would take a piepan and put tallow in it, and coil a piece of candle wicking and wallow this in the tallow, and light the end of the wick, and as this burned we would pull it out of the coil. We made lighters by taking a strip of paper and rolling it tightly, and then folding over the end twice to keep it from unrolling. We kept a glass of these setting on the mantle.

-4-

SCHOOL

At this time, there was no school here except the mission school that had been established by the Quakers at what is now Wyandotte, so my brother and I were sent there to school. We stayed at the school and were allowed to go home each six weeks and to stay from Friday to Sunday. Yes, some of us would run away; I tried it once and they came after me that night about eleven and I had to go back, but I would not have tried it again for the next morning mother would have taken me back and she would have made me walk, and she would have ridden along with me to see that I went. Uncle Jerry Hubbard was in charge of the school and we had good teachers, who, although strict, were good to us. We had very poor clothing, food, and quarters as they would be judged now-a-days but they were feeding, clothing, and teaching us at no expense to our parents and what they received was allowed them from the Government.

The boys had red duck pants put together with rivets, hickory shirts of blue and white, brogan shoes, common black hats, no socks and no underwear. The girls wore blue denim all made alike with coarse canton flannel underwear, heavy shoes and the little girls had copper toes on their shoes.

-5-

Our sleeping room or dorm, as you would say today was without fire, hard mattresses, coarse blankets and no sheets. What did we have to eat? For breakfast, we had, boiled beef, gravy, light bread, and weak coffee. For dinner, cornbread, beans, gravy and water. For supper, two tubs were filled with sliced lightbread, in one tub two slices were put together with New Orleans molasses and there were rows of pegs about two feet apart, we boys took our place at these, one boy to a peg with the larger boys in front and these led up to where two women were in charge of the two tubs of bread and as a boy moved up to the peg in front of the tub one of the women would say "With or without" and if he said "With" he was given two slices of lightbread put together with molasses and if it was without he was handed two slices of dry bread, these we took and went to where the pump was for water and this was our supper.

Major Redpath who was the agent at the Seneca Agency, came to the mission one evening as we were receiving our supper and shortly after the Government took over the school. I was seven when this happened. After that we had plenty to eat, good clothes, sheets, etc. Then our clothes were gray uniforms with red strips and the girls received blue flannel dresses.

-5-

LAW

In those days the only officers were the Indian police. Father was Captain of this for several years and received \$10.00 per month and had six men under him who received \$9.00 and all received rations. Father was supposed to be on duty two days each week but was at the agency most of the time. His helpers only worked one day each week. They policed the dances to keep whiskey out, went after and returned the children to school who ran away. When an Indian had trouble with a tenant, they adjusted this or put the tenant off and adjusted matters between the Indians when they (the Indians) had differences and they would always do what the agent advised. They never had any serious trouble.

After we came here father began to get into the cattle business and by the time that I was large enough to ride we had a considerable bunch. We had a corral at the home place of better than a half acre. It had a stake and rider fence and here each year our cattle and calves were rounded up and the young branded. Besides helping with ours I have worked for other cattlemen. I helped Dawson Cook and Sam Childers one winter. We had five

-7-

hundred then. We made Prairie City, now Ogeeshee, headquarters but our chuck wagon was moved to different places near where we had the cattle but we always kept it in the timber. Lots of the newspaper stories of those days were greatly exaggerated. Many a thing that happened was only considered fun then. Then there were no flues as today and each house had a stove-pipe through the roof. There was scarcely a one in the country that did not have bullet holes through it for the boys and men in passing would take a shot at it. The women understood and did not even get scared when they heard the shot. One Fourth of July (1894) I remember we had a picnic at Pooler's Grove and there was a dance that night in Miami in the hall above where the Zillars Grocery is now so seven of us came to town and we did see some drinking but none of us were and for the fun of it we shot out the lights in the hall and rode our horses out of town down the sidewalk, shooting in the air and yelling. We were having a good time.

Again, we learned that barrel of whiskey was to be unloaded from the Frisco at Wyandotte, so three of us headed that way and crossed Grand River and I held the horses back in the woods and the other two stopped the train and had the whiskey unloaded. They never touched or expected any-

thing else and took the whiskey to the chuck wagon which was at that time four miles south of Ottawa in the woods. This was done for a joke on the man that was to get the whiskey.

During the ten years that I was in the saddle, I have ridden with many of those that since have become pretty well known in this state. The Daltons had a home east of Wyandotte and between Highway 60 and 10 not very far from the Gilstrap home. They were good shots. I have seen one of them ride around a good sized young tree and keep shooting at the trunk till they would cut it down. Mr. Dawson here proudly displayed an old fashioned single action Colt that he has owned for more than fifty years.

EVERYDAY LIFE

We raised corn, wheat and oats. The grain was cut with a cradle and tread out. One of us children would ride a horse round and round over the grain. Most of our berries and fruits and vegetables were dried though mother did a little canning. We traded with George McGannon at Seneca, Missouri and paid our bill once a year, always in September.

The sick were taken care of and there was always

-9-

someone there to help and not everyone at once but the neighbors arranged among themselves when they should go so that there would always be someone at the home.

When Henry Sharie died, John Bland and I laid him out, and then walked to Wyandotte seven miles to Dr. Steaman and arranged with him to send out a coffin the next day. The neighbors did everything, dug the grave and the casket was placed in a neighbor's hack or rather spring wagon and driven so slowly to the cemetery with his neighbors and friends following.

One day, Uncle Irving Long, who was then chief, was driving a team of mules to an ox-wagon past Mr. Beauchamp's place (who was digging potatoes). Uncle Irving got out of his wagon without a word and took from the wagon two sacks which he filled with potatoes and loaded them into the wagon and without saying anything relative to the potatoes drove off. Later Mr. Beauchamp needing some hay hitched up to his wagon with a hay frame on it and drove to Uncle Irving's haystacks and helped himself to as much hay as he wanted and drove home with it.

Uncle Irving had a large and very long log smoke house and each year he killed many, many hogs and this or rather the poles would be full of meat. Later when any of

-10-

his friends were at his house when they left they would find concealed somewhere either in their wagon or in something he had wrapped up and given them a large piece of meat or perhaps a whole shoulder or ham, we didn't have to pen the hogs then. They were earmarked and turned out. Just before Uncle Irvin died, while he was sick, he called mother to his bed one day and told her that he owed a man in Baxter Springs a dollar and he wanted me to take "Old Fox", his favorite horse and go to Baxter and pay the man for him. When he died, I rode two horses down carrying the news through the country. He was buried at the John Bland Cemetery where my parents and several others of the tribe are. When this place was sold the owner came to the tribe and wanted \$135.00 for that part used as a cemetery so one other man and myself raised what we could and put in the rest and bought it. Henry Woody now lives on the place. To go to it, go two miles south of Ottawa then two miles east and one-half mile south.

We got our mail at a post office called Grand River, Ind. Ty. It was on the Frisco on the east side of the river. I don't know when it was established but it

-11-

was there when we came and remained there till it was moved to Wyandotte in 1887 when Wyandotte Post Office was established. Mr. Watts, a widower, was Post Master and he had a few groceries there. He had a small building made of slabs and lived in the rear of the building.

Henry Hicks also had a house there. To go there we had a community skiff fastened where the Neosho and Grand come together and this was never locked so everyone used it from our side of the river, you had to row or paddle down the river for I should judge two blocks to the building and whoever went after the mail brought the mail for the neighbors as well.

LATER LIFE

I neglected to state that my sisters did not start to school till after the Wyandotte Mission was taken over by the government and later we were all sent to Haskell. I graduated there in 1899. Then I went to Denver where I remained for nine years and worked in hardware stores.

I returned in April of 1909 and later met and on December 27th, 1911, married Bonnie Woolard who had come to this county from McDonald County, Missouri, with her parents. The next year I went into the Indian Service and remained at

-12-

Clinton, Oklahoma, as District Farmer till August of 1913. From there we went to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where I worked in a hardware store for two years. Then I returned to the Indian Service and was sent to the Rainy Mountain School at Gotebo as expert farmer till 1917, when I moved on my farm $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Ottawa where I remained seven years. In 1924, I moved my family to Miami.

We have two children, Temple, who is Superintendent of Nurses at the St. John's Hospital in Joplin, and my son Chester, who helps me in my laundry business here.

RELICS

Mr. Dawson has in his possession some things that he prizes very highly. Among them is a watch that his grandfather paid \$450.00 for, some solid silver spoons with his grandmother's initials on them, a permit to write insurance that was issued to his father in Bellfountaine in 1872, and two silk dresses that were given to his daughter by his father's sister, Ella, which are in an excellent state of preservation and are over seventy years old. One is red and the other is black.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Dawson together with his wife and son are now

-13-

conducting a growing business located east of their residence on Third Avenue, southeast of this city, and are active wide awake business people.